Remarks

Claim Status

Claims 1-38 were originally presented for examination in this application, including independent claims 1, 28 and 37. An office action issued on November 24, 2008, in which:

- Claim 33 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention.

- Claims 1-27 were rejected as being directed to non-statutory subject matter under 35 U.S.C. §101;

- Claims 28-36 were rejected as lacking the necessary physical articles or objects to constitute a machine or a manufacture under 35 U.S.C. §101;

- Claims 1, 15-16, 21-22, 28-30 and 37 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent Publication No. 2003/0131013 to Pope et al. ("Pope");

- Claims 2-14 and 32 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being obvious in light of Pope and a web publication describing services offered by Hoovers online as maintained by the Internet Archive ("Hoovers"); and

- Claims 17-20, 23-27, 31, 33-36 and 38 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being obvious in light of Pope and U.S. Patent Publication No. 2003/0009536 to Henderson et al. ("Henderson").

In this response, Applicants have cancelled claims 1-36, amended claims 37 and 38, and added new claims 39-45 to address the rejections noted above. Support for these amendments and new claims may be found throughout the specification as originally filed, and at least at paragraphs [0064], [0065] and [0073] of the application as published. No new matter has been added.

Claim Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. §112

Claim 33 has been cancelled, rendering this rejection moot.

Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §101

Claims 1-36 have been cancelled, rendering these rejections moot.

Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §102(e)

Independent claim 37, as amended, includes, in part, communications modules residing on client computers that communicate with a central server over a network. The server is configured to receive, store and redistribute topics, relationships, captured information, and associations of the captured information with the topics each being based on group membership privileges attributed to users operating the client computers. As a result, users of the system can create and use a network of related topics, and the distribution of the network is based on the group access rights of the users.

Pope, generally, is directed to a system for "obtaining organized access to information, resources, persons and other entities that may be related to a user's current focus of attention."[1] More specifically, the Pope system allows users "to focus on their chosen activities or projects" and "the entities presented may be advantageously grouped into groupings of files, persons, and communications, each of which are associated with fairly consistent sets of interaction and action types."[2] In practice, "a Trolling Agent collects data regarding information resources" and "generates inferred and explicit relationships among the files and emails it reviews."[3] Based on these relationships, the system "detects events indicative of changes in user focus," "reports information about the relatedness of entities and interactions it has monitored to the user" and "displays entities from heterogeneous sources in a homogeneous list."[4] Essentially the Pope system attempts to "discover" relationships among physical system resources (files, emails etc.) based on how users interact with the resources. Subsequently, when a user "focuses" on a particular resource, other "related" resources are presented. While Pope may describe the presentation of information based on relationships among the items themselves, he does not describe any functionality that distributes topics, relationships, captured information, and associations of the captured information with the topics based on group membership privileges, as claimed.

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[1] Pope, para. [0044].
[2] Pope, paras. [0045] and [0056].
[3] Pope, para. [0107].

Such functionality is critical in many contexts, especially large organizations with hundreds or thousands of employees and strict information security policies. For example, in the financial services industry, employees from one group (e.g., debt analysts) may view the relationships between companies and influences of certain market forces differently than others (such as equity analysts, for example). Further, information readily available to one group such as an investment banking division (e.g., underwriters of a to-be-filed IPO) may be off-limits to others. By allowing users to create the topics, the relationships and associate captured information accordingly, the system can provide updates and retrieve information based on group-specific permissions. The Pope system simply does not have this important feature.

Moreover, the architecture of the system described in claim 37, as amended, is not contemplated by Pope. Specifically, the combination of using "one or more computer application extensions" and a "central server" in communication with the client computer on which the extensions operate is novel over the cited reference. In no instance does Pope describe using client-resident application adapters and a communication module to capture and transmit information received at a client to a central server.

Henderson also fails to disclose this key feature. In summary, Henderson describes a "Collaborative Knowledge Management System" that "allows large numbers of users to access a single information repository to edit, store and retrieve content."[5] Henderson, however, is limited to "search and data organization methods" that allow "searches based on content and their relationships."[6] As described, the Henderson system merely provides methods for creating relationships among content items, such that "creates virtual files with relations to existing content based on a knowledge repository."[7] The resulting "relationships in between the pockets of knowledge" is merely a means for tagging content with identifiers linked to other content – not a way to attribute content to defined topics which themselves are linked via relationships, as claimed.[8] This distinction is critical when viewed in the context of having to update and maintain the relationships and how content items are stored and retrieved based thereon. Using the Henderson system, for example, implementing changes to content attributes necessitated by a change in a corporate structure (e.g., Sun Microsystems purchasing MySQL), a user would have

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[4] Pope, paras. [0130] - [0135].
[5] Henderson, para. [0064].
[6] Henderson, para. [0019].
[7] Henderson, para. [0021].

to modify attributes at the content level, essentially modifying tags for each and every content item associated with MySQL. In contrast, by maintaining relationships at the topic level and associating information items to topics, implementing a change in the claimed system requires only a modification to the relationship between an IBM entity and a MySQL entity – from "competes with" to "subsidiary of" for example. Clearly, such scalability is critical in systems that support large organizations tracking fluid markets.

Lastly, Hoovers was cited by the Examiner for the limited purpose of illustrating that topics may include industries, companies, indices, etc. While Hoover may list topics related to the financial services industry, it does not describe how the relationships among and information associated with the topics is received and distributed, as claimed.

Thus, for at least those reasons stated above, none of Pope, Henderson or Hoover, either alone or in combination, teaches or suggests each and every element of independent claim 37 as amended, and therefore Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of this claim under 35 U.S.C. §102(e), as well as those claims that depend directly or indirectly therefrom.

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[8] Henderson, para. [0064].

Conclusion

Applicants respectfully submit that, in light of the foregoing remarks, claims 37-45 are in condition for allowance, and requests that application proceed to issue. If, in the Examiner's opinion, a telephonic interview would expedite the favorable prosecution of the present application, the undersigned attorney would welcome the opportunity to discuss any outstanding issues and to work with the Examiner toward placing the application in condition for allowance.

Respectfully submitted,

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